

## When Dreams Come True

<sup>16</sup> When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, <sup>17</sup> and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.”

<sup>18</sup> And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days.

<sup>19</sup> In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

<sup>20</sup> On the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. <sup>21</sup> He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. <sup>22</sup> But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. <sup>23</sup> Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

<sup>1</sup> After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, <sup>2</sup> and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. <sup>3</sup> And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup> And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. <sup>5</sup> And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. <sup>6</sup> And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. <sup>7</sup> And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. <sup>8</sup> So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh. – Genesis 40:16-41:8 ESV



Joseph had provided Pharaoh’s cupbearer with a favorable interpretation of his dream, and this caught the ear of the second royal official who had been imprisoned by Pharaoh. The chief baker had also experienced a vivid and rather disturbing dream and desired to know its meaning. Hopeful that he too would receive a positive interpretation, he shared its contents with Joseph.

*“I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head.” – Genesis 40:16-17 NLT*

Whereas the cupbearer’s dream had featured three branches that bore grapes, the baker dreamed of three baskets full of pastries. Each envisioned something having to do with their

particular occupation in the royal court. But while Joseph had informed the cupbearer that Pharaoh would restore him to his former position, the baker received much more disturbing news. Without a moment's hesitation, Joseph told the anxious baker that his dream was a dark omen foreshadowing his death.

*"This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."* – Genesis 40:18-19 NLT

Joseph made no attempt to soften the blow and there's no expression of sorrow or regret in his delivery of the fateful news. He simply blurts out the details of the dream's meaning in a rather blunt and matter-of-fact manner. And Moses provides no details regarding the baker's response to this shocking news. He simply indicates that, three days later, Pharaoh invited the cupbearer and baker to join all the other royal officials at a birthday banquet in his honor. It's likely that they were allowed to bath and provided with clean garments to wear in the Pharaoh's presence. And this invitation from Pharaoh must have left both men in a state of high anxiety. How were they to know that Joseph's interpretations had been accurate? The cupbearer had been told he would be restored to his original position, but there was no way to know if Joseph was right. And the baker must have been beside himself with fear as he considered Joseph's prediction of his pending death.



As they stepped into the royal court, both men quickly discovered that Joseph's interpretations had been spot on. During the royal birthday party, Pharaoh restored the cupbearer to his former position and then had the baker impaled. And the one person in the room who would have recognized the

significance of Pharaoh's actions was the cupbearer. He had heard both of Joseph's interpretations and had just witnessed the proof of their accuracy. Everything had all turned out just as Joseph had predicted. In a sense, Pharaoh, whom the Egyptians considered to be a god, had done exactly what the God of Joseph had said he would do.

But in the heat of the moment, and having just witnessed the execution of his associate, the cupbearer was glad to be alive. And Moses indicates that he forgot all about Joseph. Restored to his former position and resplendent in his royal robes, the cupbearer put the prison and his former cellmate in the back of his mind.

*...the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.* – Genesis 40:23 ESV

It's important to recall that Joseph had explicitly begged the cupbearer to remember him and put in a good word to Pharaoh on his behalf.

*"...please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."* – Genesis 40:14-15 NLT

But for the greatly relieved cupbearer, Joseph was soon out of sight and out of mind. With a new lease on life, he simply moved on and allowed Joseph to become a distant and fading memory.

Meanwhile, back in the prison, life went on as usual for Joseph. When neither the cupbearer nor baker returned to their cells, Joseph must have been convinced that his interpretations had been accurate. But as the days passed, he must have grown increasingly more concerned that he had not been summoned before Pharaoh. Had the cupbearer forgotten him? Or did the story of his unjust imprisonment fail to sway the mind of Pharaoh? Perhaps Potiphar had intervened and demanded that Joseph remain imprisoned for his purported attack on his wife.

For two long years, Joseph remained in prison, suffering for a crime he hadn't committed. And we're provided with no details concerning his life during that long delay. But it's safe to assume that Joseph continued to enjoy a remarkable measure of success even in those less-than-ideal circumstances, because "The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed" (Genesis 39:23 NLT).

God had not forgotten Joseph. And while the days passed by with painstaking regularity, God was actively orchestrating his divine plan for Joseph's release. From a human perspective, two years is a long time, but for an infinite and eternal God who operates outside the confines of time and space, Joseph's two-year delay was little more than the time it takes to blink. As the psalmist wrote:

*For a thousand years in your sight  
are but as yesterday when it is past,  
or as a watch in the night.* – Psalm 90:4 ESV

God operates on an eternal calendar that spans well beyond the days of a man's life or the centuries of a nation's existence. Joseph's extended incarceration was a necessary part of God's plan because His timing is impeccable and "his way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30 ESV).

*The Lord is righteous in all his ways...* – Psalm 145:17 ESV

*The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul who seeks him.*

*It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.* – Lamentations 3:25-26 ESV

Joseph continued to work and wait. And as he did, his God was working behind the scenes, preparing for just the right moment to unveil the next phase of His redemptive plan for Joseph, the people of Israel, and the nations of the world. And it's not surprising that the next chapter of Joseph's amazing life began would include yet another dream. But this time, it wasn't Joseph, a cupbearer, or a baker who were awakened from their sleep by a God-ordained dream, it was Pharaoh.

One of the most powerful men in the world was shaken from his slumber by a disturbing vision. This so-called deity was being robbed of rest by Yahweh, the one true God. And Pharaoh would receive two different, yet similar visions that left him disturbed and disconcerted. Yet, none of his court magicians or royal conjurers could explain the meaning behind his dreams. And this vacuum within Pharaoh's royal court would prove to be a God-ordained opportunity for Joseph to utilize his interpretive skills one more time. Pharaoh had a dream. Joseph had a gift. And God had a plan.

## What God Is About To Do

<sup>9</sup> Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember my offenses today. <sup>10</sup> When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, <sup>11</sup> we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. <sup>12</sup> A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. <sup>13</sup> And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” <sup>16</sup> Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” <sup>17</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. <sup>18</sup> Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. <sup>19</sup> Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, <sup>21</sup> but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. <sup>22</sup> I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. <sup>23</sup> Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, <sup>24</sup> and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup> The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. <sup>27</sup> The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, <sup>31</sup> and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. <sup>32</sup> And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. <sup>33</sup> Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup> Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. <sup>35</sup> And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. <sup>36</sup> That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.” – Genesis 41:9-36 ESV

For two years, the cupbearer to Pharaoh had managed to enjoy his plush life as an official in the royal court. His brief stint in the royal prison was a long-forgotten memory. But as he enjoyed

the comforts that came with his restored position as a personal advisor to Pharaoh, his former cellmate, Joseph, remained in prison, serving time for a crime he had not committed. But while Joseph was innocent, the cupbearer was guilty of having reneged on his promise to bring Joseph's predicament to Pharaoh's attention. It simply slipped his mind – for two long years.



But then God intervened, yet again. But this time, rather than focusing His attention on the prison where Joseph languished in relative anonymity, God invaded the royal sanctity of the royal palace and the mind of Pharaoh himself. Yahweh went straight to the top of the Egyptian corporate ladder, using the most powerful man in the land to accomplish His divine will. Pharaoh experienced a pair of dreams that seemed to contain ominous portents of future destruction, but he could find no one in his royal court to explain their meaning. This self-proclaimed deity was powerless to solve the riddle of his perplexing visions.

The failure of Pharaoh's wise men and magicians to provide him with a meaning to the dreams must have left the entire royal court in a state of panic. After all, Pharaoh was not averse to imprisoning those who displeased him, a fact the cupbearer knew all too well. Pharaoh's dreams had turned life in the royal court into a virtual nightmare, as everyone anxiously waited to see if his anger would cause heads to roll and the prison population to swell. And the thought of returning to prison must have jogged the cupbearer's memory because he suddenly recalled the commitment he had made to Joseph.

Suddenly recalling Joseph's successful interpretation of his own dream, the cupbearer realized the solution to Pharaoh's problem might be right under his nose – in his royal prison. So, utilizing his intimate access to Pharaoh as the royal cupbearer, he decided to risk his master's wrath and share the story of his encounter with the young Hebrew prisoner.

*"We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cupbearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole." – Genesis 41:12-13*  
NLT

This news must have thrilled Pharaoh because he immediately ordered that Joseph be released from prison and brought to the royal palace. One can only imagine what Joseph must have thought when the royal guards showed up and led him away to the palace. His mind must have reeled as he considered the meaning behind this sudden change in his circumstances. He had

no way of knowing what awaited him, but perhaps he wondered whether the cupbearer had finally decided to honor his commitment. But as Joseph bathed, shaved, and put on the clean robes he had been provided; his heart must have raced as he considered what was about to happen.

Eventually, Joseph found himself standing before the most powerful man in all of Egypt. Just moments earlier, this young Hebrew boy had been a common criminal serving out his sentence in a dank prison, but now he found himself in the royal palace staring into the face of Pharaoh. All of this must have been a shock to his senses and left him wondering what God might be doing. But he soon had his answer.

Pharaoh wasted no time in revealing the reason for Joseph's appearance in the royal court. He was there to interpret the Pharaoh's dreams. But Joseph appears to have been unphased by the seriousness of the moment or the celebrity status of his royal host. Upon discovering the nature of Pharaoh's request, Joseph confidently replied, "It is beyond my power to do this...But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease" (Genesis 41:16 NLT).

Joseph wasn't star-struck and showed no signs of fear or intimidation. He comes across as someone who felt comfortable in his own skin and confident in the sovereignty of his God. A smile must have come across his face as he heard Pharaoh say, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means" (Genesis 41:15 NLT). He knew from personal experience that this statement was not true. Interpreting dreams was his specialty – with God's help. So, Joseph listened intently as Pharaoh shared the content of his dreams. Then, as he had done before, Joseph responded without a moment's hesitation or deliberation.

*"Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do." – Genesis 41:25 NLT*

Joseph didn't stop to consider the content of his message or the status of his audience. He simply shared the meaning that God had given him. Pharaoh's two dreams had one interpretation that led to a single conclusion: Things were about to get difficult in the land of Egypt. Joseph informed Pharaoh and his court that God had decreed a seven-year period of plenty to be followed by a second seven years of devastating drought. There was going to be a catastrophic loss of livestock and grain in the land of Egypt that would lead to starvation and loss of life.

You can almost hear the gasps from the dignitaries in the room as Joseph shares this less-than-encouraging news. While Pharaoh had probably assumed that the negative nature of his dreams was not a harbinger of good things to come, it's likely that this interpretation was not what he had been expecting. And, to make matters worse, Joseph explained that the two dreams with one interpretation were a sign that "these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen" (Genesis 41:32 NLT).

It's important to remember that the Egyptians had a pantheon of gods they worshiped, and Yahweh was not among them. So, when Joseph referred to אֱלֹהִים (*'ēlōhîm*), this was not a deity with whom they were particularly familiar. This Hebrew term for God was a somewhat generic word that could be used to refer to judges, rulers, or gods in general. But, for Joseph, it was a reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was informing Pharaoh that the one true God was about to bring enact His sovereign will over the nation of Egypt, and there was nothing anyone could do to stop Him.

But Joseph informed Pharaoh that there was a way to prepare for the inevitable. While there was nothing he could do to thwart God's will, he could take steps to prevent the complete annihilation of his people. It seems obvious that, along with the interpretation, God had given Joseph the step-by-step plans he shared with Pharaoh. And Joseph faithfully conveyed the details of God's sovereign strategy for Egypt's survival, warning Pharaoh to follow them to the letter, "Otherwise this famine will destroy the land" (Genesis 41:36 NLT).

But what Joseph didn't know was that he would be the one to make it all happen. God had chosen him to be the "intelligent and wise man" (Genesis 41:33 NLT), whom Pharaoh would place in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Joseph was not just the messenger, but he was also to be the deliverer. Little did he know that he was about to move from the prison to the palace, from the role of a lowly servant to the position of a sovereign ruler over all the land of Egypt. And it was all part of God's preordained plan. The sovereign God of the universe was about to do something that neither Pharaoh nor Joseph could have ever imagined.

## God's Man With the Plan

<sup>37</sup> This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. <sup>38</sup> And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" <sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. <sup>40</sup> You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." <sup>41</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. <sup>43</sup> And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup> Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." <sup>45</sup> And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup> During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, <sup>48</sup> and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. <sup>49</sup> And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

<sup>50</sup> Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. <sup>51</sup> Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." <sup>52</sup> The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

<sup>53</sup> The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, <sup>54</sup> and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. <sup>55</sup> When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do."

<sup>56</sup> So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. <sup>57</sup> Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth. – Genesis 41:37-57 ESV

With his successful interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph's fortunes were about to take a dramatic turn for the better. There would be no return to the prison or his former life of slavery. Instead, he would find himself appointed to the second-highest position in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh had been greatly impressed by Joseph's wisdom and insight and seemed to believe that this young man had a divine anointing.

*“Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?” – Genesis 41:38 NLT*



This statement was not a confession of belief in Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is unlikely that Pharaoh knew anything about the God of the Israelites. He simply believed that Joseph had supernatural powers that were attributable to some divine source. It appears that Pharaoh believed Joseph to be possessed by and under the influence of some unknown deity. He acknowledged that Joseph’s superior intellect and wisdom had to be divinely inspired. There have been some scholars who suggest that Pharaoh

believed Joseph was actually a deity in human form. They use the name given to Joseph by Pharaoh as possible evidence.

*Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. – Genesis 41:45 ESV*

The exact meaning of Joseph’s Egyptian name has been hotly debated and remains unconfirmed. But one intriguing suggestion has been “the god speaks and lives.” The very fact that Pharaoh elevated Joseph so quickly and bestowed on him such high honors would seem to indicate that he viewed this young Hebrew as much more than just another wise man. He had plenty of those in his royal court and they had proved to be useless in solving the riddle of his dreams.

Joseph’s meteoric rise to power and prominence must have shocked Joseph. In a matter of minutes, his entire life had been turned upside down. This former household slave and prisoner now had power and possessions beyond belief. Pharaoh rewarded him with expensive gifts and arranged a marriage between Joseph and the daughter of a high-ranking priest. This “religious” marriage seems to further suggest that Pharaoh believed Joseph to be some kind of deity. His Egyptian wife’s name lends further evidence to this idea. One interpretation for its meaning is “she belongs to the goddess Neit.” It may be that Asenath was also viewed as a child of the gods and that Pharaoh was arranging a special marriage between what he believed to be two deified human beings.

But regardless of what Pharaoh’s beliefs and motives might have been, his intentions are perfectly clear. He was placing this young foreigner in a position of great power and influence. In a sense, Joseph was one step away from the throne of Egypt. And as a symbol of his limitless authority, Joseph was given a signet ring that bore the royal seal and carried with it the full backing of Pharaoh.

*“You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours.” – Genesis 41:40 NLT*

Joseph was placed in a royal chariot and paraded around the streets of the royal capital, with Egyptian soldiers commanding all the onlookers to kneel before him. This forced display of honor and obeisance was meant to let the people know that Joseph was due all the respect of Pharaoh, whom they believed to be a god. Joseph was to be treated with the same level of reverence and awe, and anything he said was to be taken as divinely inspired and worthy of obedience. And Pharaoh clearly articulated the unparalleled nature of Joseph’s authority when he said, “I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval” (Genesis 41:44 NLT).

Joseph was 30-years old when he assumed this new position as Pharaoh’s right-hand man, and he wasted no time in implementing the advice he had given when he had interpreted the dreams. Joseph began a tour of the land of Egypt, assessing the status of the royal agricultural and livestock capacities. Based on the divinely inspired meaning of the dreams, Joseph knew he had seven years to increase production to prepare for the seven years of famine that were to come. And, just as God has said would happen, the first seven years were marked by remarkable bounty and blessing.

*As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure. – Genesis 41:47-49 NLT*

God was faithfully fulfilling the words He had spoken through Joseph. And, not only that, God was blessing Jacob, rewarding him with two sons. In naming his boys, Joseph attempted to convey his gratitude to God for all that He had done. The name Manasseh means “he who brings about forgetfulness.” This young child was a loving reminder from God that Joseph’s difficult past was to be forgotten. There was a much brighter and far more important future out ahead. The name Ephraim means “to bear fruit,” and reflects Joseph’s belief that God had not only bestowed fruitfulness to the land but on his life as well. Despite his immense wealth and potentially pride-producing power, Joseph never lost sight of God’s authority over his life. He was fully aware that his promotion had been God’s doing and that he was enjoying the undeserved blessings of God’s divine favor.

But just as God had warned, the seven years of plenty were quickly followed by seven years of intense and widely dispersed famine. This divinely ordained disaster spread throughout the land of Egypt and beyond, and its impact was devastating. Without grain, the people were unable to eat or feed their livestock, and soon, they were forced to turn to the government for assistance. But because Joseph had done his work, the royal warehouses were filled and he had more than enough supply to meet the growing demand.

And, as has been so readily apparent throughout the story of Joseph's life, the sovereign hand of God was at work behind the scenes, preparing for the next phase of His divine plan. This famine was not localized, but "was severe over all the earth" (Genesis 41:57 ESV). People all throughout the surrounding regions were suffering the same fate as the Egyptians, but they had not been warned or been able to prepare for this unforeseen disaster. They didn't have the luxury of a godly leader like Joseph who could have helped them take advantage of the seven years of bounty. So, when the famine hit, they were left with empty grains bins and nothing to feed their starving herds and flocks. And, before long, they heard the rumors about food in Egypt and made the long and arduous journey to find help in their time of need. And there in the land of the Pharaohs, they discovered Joseph, who "opened up the storehouses and distributed grain" (Genesis 41:57 NLT).